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Chairman: Mr. Butagira ..... (Uganda)
later: Mr. Anshor (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Indonesia)
Mr. Butagira ..... (Uganda)
Ms. Carvalho (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Portugal)
Mr. Butagira ..... (Uganda)

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05-55548 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 67: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/60/175 and Corr.1, A/60/207, A/60/282 and A/60/335).

1. **Ms. Al-Muhairy** (United Arab Emirates) said that her Government had enacted a number of new laws and acceded to the relevant regional and international conventions on the rights of children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its commitment to protecting the rights of the child had been reflected in various national measures, including the establishment of maternity and child health care and medical centres, which had helped to bring mortality rates for children under five closer to those in developed countries. Polio had also been eradicated in 2002 through immunization campaigns.

2. Other measures included the provision of universal primary education, which was mandatory for both boys and girls, and free education from kindergarten to university. New legislation had been enacted to protect children both within the family and within State institutions which cared for orphans and abandoned children and to protect children from all forms of exploitation, including the prohibition against persons under 18 from participating in camel races. A national agency had been established to promote better standards of care and attention for mothers and children. Centres for children with disabilities and special needs had been established throughout the United Arab Emirates to provide needed medical, psychological, social and educational services. Rehabilitation centres had also been set up to provide juvenile offenders with the necessary psychological and social care for their reintegration into society.

3. To encourage development, the United Arab Emirates had made significant contributions in cash and in kind to United Nations agencies concerned with children and had extended direct assistance to developing countries and countries affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts in order to help to create a world fit for children.

4. Palestinian children continued to suffer from tragic humanitarian and security conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories which posed grave threats to their lives and future. The continuing attacks, closures and oppressive policies of the Israeli occupying forces had resulted in the killing and maiming of thousands of children and the spread of poverty and disease. Her delegation therefore called on the international community to compel Israel to cease its aggressive policies and ensure its respect for and commitment to the principles and provisions of international humanitarian law including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

5. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) said that the promotion of an agenda for development and implementation of Millennium Development Goals could make a crucial difference in poverty eradication. The realization of the Goals, which had a direct bearing on children, depended, first, on the will of Member States to meet their commitments at the 2005 World Summit to mobilize resources and extend foreign direct investment to complement national poverty eradication efforts. Secondly, the international community should concentrate on conflict resolution. As armed conflict affected millions of children, exposing them to exploitation, sexual violence, displacement and other ills, Member States should devote some attention to the issue of children in armed conflict within the framework of the Peacebuilding Commission. Thirdly, there was a need to combat the diseases which most threatened children through such means as vaccination and immunization campaigns, access to clean water and sanitation. The international community must also consider a range of issues to help children affected by HIV/AIDS. Fourthly, education required attention, in particular with respect to the special needs of the girl child. Fifthly, children must be protected against abuse, exploitation and violence. Efforts must focus on families, the community, raising awareness and the promulgation of legislative and administrative measures to eliminate such abuse. Sixthly, the horrendous impact of natural disasters on children underscored the need to establish standby rapid response capacity to meet their most immediate needs.

6. The efforts of his Government to create a healthy environment for children were based on a national framework and the goals set forth in the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children", the Millennium Declaration and relevant international conventions. A commission had been established and a plan of action was being prepared in collaboration with civil society actors to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international instruments to which Pakistan was a party. In addition, legislation

had been enacted to prohibit capital punishment against juvenile offenders and to create separate prison facilities for them. Corporal punishment, which had been banned in the Punjab, was likely to be prohibited in other provinces.

7. Other measures included free education up to the tenth grade and equal educational opportunities for the girl child. The national plan of action on education set the goal of universal enrolment in primary school by 2015. Special incentives such as the provision of uniforms, textbooks and meals in schools were available to promote the education of girls. The health sector had also been accorded priority.

8. Pakistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy put special emphasis on alleviating the impact of poverty on children. Legislation had been enacted to prevent human trafficking, which effectively banned trafficking of children. Pakistan was also making efforts to repatriate and rehabilitate children smuggled abroad for commercial purposes. The eradication of child labour was a priority for his Government. In collaboration with the private sector, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and civil society, child labour had been successfully eradicated from the soccer ball and carpet industries.

9. His Government was also implementing its obligations under the relevant conventions of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It had hosted the SAARC meeting of the South Asian Forum for Ending Violence against Children in Islamabad in 2005. His Government had established national child protection centres in several cities and supported an ambitious agenda for the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

10. **Mr. Hackett** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that his delegation fully supported the United Nations in its work to safeguard and promote the rights of children and commended its efforts to increase the capacity of States to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The situation of children in many places around the globe, however, continued to be a cause of great concern. Poverty, conflict, instability, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation and natural disasters hindered the development of many countries and affected children in particular, as was shown in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/60/207).

11. The Millennium Development Goals, the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children" and most recently the document of the 2005 World Summit Outcome placed heavy emphasis on ensuring the health, education and security of children through time-bound, specific goals. While the Millennium Development Goals were achievable, it was unlikely that all countries would meet them by 2015, particularly the goals related to children, such as achieving universal primary education.

12. CARICOM called for a recommitment to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, particularly the targets for domestic and international resource mobilization and investment in basic social and economic infrastructure, health, nutrition, education and social security programmes which paid special attention to children. Meeting those targets necessitated a multisectoral approach, universal access to social services of good quality at the national level and the commitment of all countries to the full implementation of the Oslo Consensus on 20/20. Developed countries must fulfil their commitments to promote international trade as an engine for development, afford greater debt relief and increase ODA levels to 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI).

13. After sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean region had the highest rates of HIV/AIDS which, besides devastating populations and orphaning thousands of children, was posing a threat to economic and social development. CARICOM renewed its call to the international community to devote more funds and attention to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Its member States had addressed the effects of HIV/AIDS on children through national programmes which sought, inter alia, to reduce the rate of mother-to-child transmission. Public education programmes had been started across the region with the aid of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), since the best means of combating the effects of HIV/AIDS on children was through education.

14. Lastly, education was a means both to combat child labour and HIV/AIDS and to achieve economic and social development. Throughout the region, boys and girls were entitled to free primary and secondary

education and, in most countries, attendance was mandatory between the ages of 5 and 16. CARICOM had therefore given particular attention to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to make education accessible to all children.

15. **Ms. Lund** (Norway) said that in no country were children truly safe from violence. Physical and mental violence against children took place in the home and the family, in schools, governmental institutions and the workplace. Children were beaten, molested, tortured, sexually abused, held in slavery and trafficked. Violence against children infringed on their enjoyment of human rights and freedoms such as the right to health and privacy and, in too many cases, even the right to life.

16. The United Nations study by the Independent Expert was an important step towards ending silence in the face of violence against children. Her Government looked forward to studying the final report, particularly the issue of ensuring State accountability. Efforts must not end with the release of the report, however. The study recommendations must be clear and complemented by objective and feasible suggestions for implementation.

17. Her Government had launched a strategy to combat sexual and physical child abuse, including measures to prevent and disclose such abuse, increase assistance to children and their families and enhance research and professional qualifications. The prohibition of all forms of corporal punishment was an important step towards ending violence against children. In Norway, corporal punishment of children had been explicitly prohibited since 1986.

18. The human rights mechanisms of the Council of Europe were insisting that children must have equal protection. The Parliamentary Assembly had called for the continent to become a corporal-punishment-free zone for children as quickly as possible. It was imperative that Member States should enable children to actively take part in that struggle. The active participation of children was in itself a remedy against violence. Children must never be made or allowed to remain invisible, as invisible children were easy prey to perpetrators of violence.

19. Children were particularly vulnerable in situations of war and armed conflict, as physical, mental and sexual violence escalated and social structures and safety nets broke down. Norway welcomed Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. The reporting and monitoring mechanism on children in armed conflict must be given the necessary resources to carry out its mandate in an efficient and transparent manner. There was a need for follow up to the recommendations in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict concerning the importance of systematic engagement by the Security Council, deployment of child protection advisers to peacekeeping operations, the incorporation of children and children's issues throughout peacekeeping processes and the engagement and interaction with civil society.

20. **Mr. Koshnaw** (Iraq) said that the suffering of Iraqi children knew no end; in addition to the multitude of traumas experienced during three decades of war and embargo, they were currently at daily risk of being killed, injured or disabled in terrorist attacks and landmine explosions. Nevertheless, with the encouragement of the State and relatives, they were managing to pursue their education and join in the efforts to rebuild Iraq. Measures were being taken to strengthen and promote the rights of children in Iraq, for whom provision had been made in the draft Constitution. For instance, the Government was endeavouring to enact or amend legislation in order to eliminate violence against children, as well as increase the number of child welfare institutions and review their funding. Moreover, in the context of ending the military recruitment of children, Iraq had stated its intention to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict when the next Government was formed. He appealed to the international community, in particular the United Nations and humanitarian organizations, to cooperate with Iraq's governmental and non-governmental organizations in devoting special attention to the situation of Iraqi children in order to alleviate their suffering and give them a stable life. He thanked all those who had already lent assistance for that purpose and hoped that such efforts would continue until Iraq was again stabilized and secure.

21. **Mr. Nkingiye** (Burundi) said that his delegation was greatly concerned by the plight of children in armed conflict. There was a need for greater awareness and mobilization of public opinion to assist such children. A follow-up mechanism for that purpose must

also be established. His delegation welcomed the recommendations put forward in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/60/335) in that respect. Furthermore, as stated in the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2004/431), it was still necessary to develop "further measures to promote the responsibility of armed groups and non-State actors" (para. 16).

22. Several positive developments had been registered since the end of the period covered in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/59/695-S/2005/72). Two of the parties mentioned in the report — the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD) of Leonard Nyangoma and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie — Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) of Pierre Nkurunziza — had become political parties, which allowed for the quartering of their combatants. Demobilization and reintegration, including former child soldiers, were under way. His Government therefore called on the international community to firmly support its efforts to reintegrate them into social and economic life.

23. His Government hoped that the remaining party that had not yet laid down its arms — the Parti de libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) — would begin negotiations to end the conflict in Burundi definitively and that a solution would be found to the problem of children in situations of armed conflict. Lastly, his Government called on the movement to cease recruiting children or engaging in any action that might undermine the integrity and well-being of children in Burundi.

24. **Mr. Al-Mekrad** (Kuwait) said that he wished to emphasize the importance of the goals set out in "A world fit for children", which, together with the 2005 World Summit Outcome, represented a major step towards fulfilment of the commitments undertaken at the Millennium Summit. He also emphasized the importance of regularly gathering information on the situation of violence against children, in which connection he looked forward to completion of the final report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on the subject. Kuwait was a youthful society whose children received early attention through the child-related plans and programmes elaborated by various governmental and non-governmental institutions, the benefits of which were reflected in the country's high human development ranking. Kuwait's numerous associations for children with special needs and disabilities also worked to ensure that such children were socially integrated and enjoyed the same rights as other children.

25. Kuwait's concern for children extended beyond its own territory; it had established the Kuwaiti Association for the Advancement of Arab Children and had been publishing an Arab children's magazine for almost 20 years, in addition to which it participated in international conferences and symposiums on child-related subjects. It had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and ratified its two Optional Protocols, as well as acceding to the ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Given the mass of problems still facing children in many areas of the world, the time had come for the international community to recharge its efforts to ensure that the conventions aimed at protecting children's rights and securing their future were implemented in both letter and spirit.

26. **Ms. Otani** (Japan) said that the four major goal areas set out in the Plan of Action adopted at the General Assembly's special session on children, in 2002 — namely, promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence and combating HIV/AIDS — were important in building a world fit for children, which would itself be a major step towards meeting the commitments made at the Millennium Summit. While progress had been achieved in those areas, much still remained to be done to alleviate the suffering of children worldwide.

27. Japan, for its part, had taken specific measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography it had ratified in January 2005. It had enacted new or revised laws and established a national plan of action to combat the sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children, addressing in particular the growing problem of child prostitution via the Internet. It had also taken comprehensive measures to combat trafficking in persons, including an amendment to its Penal Code, cooperating in international action to that end with other countries and faith-based organizations

and through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

28. For Japan, human security meant the protection of the individual and promotion of his or her empowerment. That was the idea behind her country's Flash Support for Consolidation of Peace in Africa, under which Japan contributed to international efforts in support of community rehabilitation and assistance in Sierra Leone, Rwanda and northern Uganda, consolidation of peace in the Sudan, for which it had made an emergency grant, and reinforcement of the family through support to crisis-affected households in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Noting in that connection the establishment by the Security Council of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children in situations of armed conflict, she looked forward to its early implementation.

29. Stressing that children were particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, she said that Japan had been active, in cooperation with non-governmental and other organizations, in providing support to victims of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and of the recent earthquake in Pakistan, in particular through emergency assistance to United Nations system organizations.

30. *Mr. Anshor (Indonesia) took the Chair.*

31. **Ms. Thomas** (Cuba) said that what had been achieved in improving the situation of children in the world was insignificant in relation to the challenges. She referred in particular to the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/175), which included statistics demonstrating the harshness of the conditions suffered by almost half the world's two billion children. There was therefore an urgent need to address the real causes of that suffering, which lay in the unjust international order and in the ever-growing differences thus created between the rich and the poor.

32. Social development was the only way of really tackling the roots of poverty among children and effectively addressing the economic and social problems affecting them. In that regard, the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Cuba had been one of the first countries to ratify, offered the most appropriate framework for action. Indeed, on that basis, Cuba had developed measures to improve the situation of children, inspired by a new social, cultural and political philosophy.

33. In Cuba, 100 per cent of children had access to all health-care services, while 99.4 per cent of primary school-age children attended school, including those receiving special education, benefiting from a pupil/teacher ratio of 20 to 1. In addition, art, theatre, dance and music had been opened throughout the country.

34. Her country was however impeded in its efforts by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on the country, which made it difficult for it to have access to medicine and technology or to provide better social benefits. Cuba nevertheless remained determined to continue doing everything possible to help create a world fit for children.

35. **Mr. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country was a youthful society and therefore gave maximum priority to children and their welfare, as manifested in its national plan and policy approaches aimed at improving the status of children. A high-level committee on children had been formed to deal with all child-related issues and follow-up implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two Optional Protocols, as well as implementation of the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children held in 2002. A national plan for the protection of children against violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation had also been presented to the Syrian President and Government in early October 2005. Health indicators, including infant and under-five mortality rates, had improved considerably as a result of the national efforts made on behalf of children. For over three decades, the country had additionally sought, inter alia, to link education with sustainable development and make it accessible to both sexes. Primary education was compulsory and the Syrian labour laws prohibited the employment of anyone under 15 years of age, while the Penal Code prescribed heavy penalties for violence against minors.

36. The continuing Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, however, had adverse repercussions on the lives of Syrian children and was a major impediment to their rights under the Convention; Israeli nationality was imposed on them, they were denied free access to information and they suffered from the severe shortage of available health facilities. As in previous years, he again regretted that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had been unable to report on the suppression and killing of Palestinian children by the Israeli occupation

authorities. He nevertheless hoped that the violence perpetrated against children in the occupied Syrian Golan by those same authorities would receive the attention it deserved in the final report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children. In the interest of evolving a comprehensive and systematic strategy for eliminating the rising tide of violations against children, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, he stressed that there was no room for double standards or selectivity in addressing the issues relating to the children around the globe who were affected by armed conflict and foreign occupation.

37. **Ms. Henouda** (Algeria) said that the almost universal rate of accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was a clear sign of the importance that the international community attached to the protection of children. For all that, and notwithstanding the growing international consensus on that issue, the situation of children remained highly precarious in many countries in the world. Indeed, because they were the most vulnerable, children were the main victims of poverty, pandemics and armed conflicts. Homeless, deprived of education, uprooted, recruited as child soldiers, millions of them were subjected to every form of exploitation. Recalling in that connection that seven of the Millennium Development Goals concerned children directly, she stressed that having access to education, medical care, food, safe water and housing was also part of human rights.

38. Africa had already become aware of the issues involved and had accordingly adopted, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity, a Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, while the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was designed to serve as a comprehensive framework for eradicating the socio-economic obstacles to the full development of African children. Lacking, however, the means to meet all the challenges facing it, Africa counted on the combined efforts of the international community to reduce the negative effects of globalization on the developing countries, achieve the goals of sustainable development and restructure its action around the question of the right to development.

39. Algeria, for its part, had since independence given priority to the social welfare and well-being of children, carrying out to that effect intersectoral plans of action to reduce infant mortality, improve the food situation of children, promote universal access to basic education and give assistance to children living in difficult conditions. It had actively participated in the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on children and had spared no effort to implement the plan of action adopted on that occasion. In September 2005, it had submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child; it had ratified ILO Convention 182 for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour; and it had replied in good time to the questionnaire in preparation for the study by the Secretary-General on violence against children.

40. *Mr. Butagira (Uganda) resumed the Chair.*

41. **Ms. Tincopa** (Peru) said that the main objective of development was the well-being of children and young people, whose rights had accordingly to be respected, in particular through the elaboration by the State of a strategic plan of action giving priority to the eradication of poverty and the reduction of social inequality through appropriate policy measures. Peru was, to that end, carrying out a national plan of action for children and adolescents for the period 2002-2010, drawn up in consultation with State institutions and civil society and designed to introduce structural changes in their situation, which continued to be marked by social and other inequalities, leading often to exposure to early employment, dropout, economic and sexual exploitation, drug addiction, alcoholism and HIV/AIDS infection. One of its top priorities was to combat poverty and reduce social inequality, and to that end it sought to improve health, education, food security, family and community welfare, provide protection against violence, exploitation and abuse and involve young people in decision-making.

42. Peru had recently launched two national campaigns: to promote the right of each child to a name and identity, encouraging in particular the registration of all births; and to develop a culture of respect for children and young people, in keeping with the country's policy to combat violence, notably against the young.

43. The Medium-Term Strategic Plan of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the period 2006-2009 would enable each country or region to draw up targeted programmes or strategies, geared to specific conditions. In addition, the cross-cutting gender approach in the Plan would be valuable in promoting equity, seeking to eradicate all forms of

violence and discrimination against girls and women, and combating HIV/AIDS. She concluded by reaffirming Peru's commitment to promoting the rights of children and young people.

44. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that Iceland remained fully committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, which it had already ratified. He urged other countries likewise to become parties to those instruments. He welcomed the progress made in implementing the commitments made at the special session of the General Assembly on children through translation into national policies and strategies.

45. Violence against children existed in all societies in varying degrees. Iceland had made it the explicit duty of parents to protect children from violence and had banned them from inflicting corporal punishment on them. Again, Iceland urged Member States that had not taken similar legislative measures to do so, and likewise to reflect the provisions of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) in their efforts to ensure the safety and security of children in conflict areas. His country supported the work being done in the United Nations system on that subject, as it did the efforts being made internationally to combat the commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking and sexual abuse of children, which were among the greatest threats to children in the world.

46. On the subject of children without parental care, he drew attention to the Recommendation of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on the rights of children living in residential institutions and expressed support for the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to draw up a set of standards for the protection and alternative care of children without parental case for consideration by the General Assembly in 2006. He concluded by emphasizing the importance attached by his country to action to safeguard the rights and interests of children, reflected in its substantially increased contribution to UNICEF in 2005.

47. *Ms. Carnhalo (Portugal) took the Chair.*

48. **Mr. Al-Afifi** (Oman) said that his country, which firmly believed that children were the foundation of society and the ends and means of development, attached particular importance to children and their welfare. The Government had therefore adopted expert-assisted programmes and plans in the interest of children, including reconstitution of the National Committee for Child Welfare, as part of a comprehensive strategy to monitor the efforts to follow up and implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. An orphan-fostering scheme had been introduced and nurseries throughout the country played an important pre-school role in developing children's learning capacities. The National Programme of Action for Children was also an affirmation of the country's determination to pursue its efforts and achieve successes to add to those already accomplished in primary health care, for instance, which had led to a reduction in the under-five mortality rate. Various ministries also ran a programme for families on coping with young children and a conference on violence against women had been held, in conjunction with UNICEF, representing a positive step towards linking such violence with human rights.

49. He was proud to say that violations of children's rights were non-existent in Oman, which complied with all the international instruments on the subject. It had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1997 and ratified its two Optional Protocols at the end of 2004. Committees had also been formed to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention among childcarers. International reports on the status of children in Oman testified to the successes which his country had achieved for its children, to whom it was fully committed.

50. **Ms. Kulzhanova** (Kazakhstan) said that the practical implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children depended on the effectiveness of international assistance to countries in need. Although some progress had been achieved in the improvement of the status of children, many problems persisted. The advancement of women and children was an integral part of Kazakhstan's national development programme. The Government had strengthened its legislation to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was taking steps to improve children's access to education, health care and social assistance. There was no gender disparity in education and primary education was compulsory for both boys and girls.

51. Kazakhstan pursued a multisectoral approach to the promotion of children's rights and had sought to involve various non-governmental organizations and youth movements. Government programmes had been

developed in a number of areas, including legal protection and health-care reform, and a project on teaching children and adolescents non-violent behaviour was being carried out in conjunction with UNICEF. A government plan of action to combat and prevent human trafficking was also being implemented. Other achievements included the establishment of crisis centres for female and child victims of violence and the adoption of a law on the prevention of juvenile delinquency, child neglect and homelessness of children. A bill on domestic violence was currently being drafted.

52. The Government of Kazakhstan was tackling those problems in close cooperation with international organizations and various United Nations specialized agencies. It recognized the invaluable work carried out by UNICEF and had been making voluntary contributions to the agency in recent years.

53. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel) said that his Government was committed to the principles outlined in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and in the outcome of the special session on children.

54. Israel had built a cross-sectional infrastructure to enhance its efforts to promote and protect children and was coordinating many of its efforts with non-governmental organizations, including an association for the planning and development of services for minors at risk. The pluralistic nature of Israeli society presented unique challenges for the development of policies to protect children. In an effort to be both effective and ethnically sensitive, Israel was developing tailor-made programmes for Bedouins and other population groups.

55. Caring for children was a global concern. Israel offered training courses on a wide range of issues concerning children and would be pleased to share its experience with the international community.

56. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the increasing interest in children's issues and concerns was clear evidence of the wider awareness of children's rights and the desire to protect those rights, as exemplified in the national programmes and projects implemented in conjunction with the United Nations. The international and regional concern for children's rights had culminated in the special session of the General Assembly on children in 2002 and adoption of the Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children", the four major goal areas of which were reinforced by the Millennium Development Goals. Coordination and stronger regional and international partnerships, however, remained the most successful means of furthering the efforts already made.

57. The Sudan had been among the first to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had also recently signed its two Optional Protocols. Through a national action plan, great progress had been made in regard to health, education and the supply of safe drinking water, and efforts to enact and harmonize legislation with the Convention and its Optional Protocols continued. The establishment of the National Council for Child Welfare had also provided an institutional framework for the planning, sponsorship and supervision of child-related programmes and projects, while the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement had ushered in climate favourable to development. Programmes and schemes had been started for the reintegration of children affected by the war, and in that connection he looked forward to effective support from UNICEF, with which the Sudan already enjoyed close cooperation. Lastly, he appealed to the international community to take the action needed to end the Israeli practices responsible for the suffering and deprivation of innocent Palestinian children; their fundamental rights, including the right to life and the right to an independent State, should be guaranteed.

58. **Mr. Kariyawasam** (Sri Lanka) said that Governments had a continuing obligation to build a child-friendly world, in accordance with the Declaration and Plan of Action set out in the document entitled "A world fit for children". The 2005 World Summit outcome had identified the use of children in armed conflicts as a growing threat which required urgent global attention. Sri Lanka expected the United Nations agencies to redouble their efforts regarding children and armed conflict and called for a new mandate for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict and for sustained funding of the Office of the Special Representative from the United Nations regular budget.

59. His delegation was pleased that paragraph 8 of document A/60/335 shed light on an important aspect of the United Nations practice of listing parties to armed conflicts and that paragraph 51 of the same report clarified the Special Representative's sensitive role in engaging both Governments and insurgent groups. Although it was necessary to maintain dialogue

with insurgents, a pragmatic balance should be struck between that need and the overriding obligation under international law to protect children and halt systematic grave violations. The time had come for the United Nations to promote a policy of zero tolerance regarding violators of children's rights and to deny them any cover of legitimacy that might be conferred by their interactions with United Nations representatives and other international entities. The international human rights community, especially the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, were to be commended for their leadership efforts in that regard.

60. His delegation particularly welcomed reminder in paragraph 11 of the report that certain acts against children were war crimes. Sri Lanka was of the opinion that the recruitment of children by the armed group, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, consisted of four grave violations, namely attacks against schools and civilian centres; abduction of children; denial of humanitarian access for children; and the use of children in armed conflict.

61. The Government of Sri Lanka wished to commend the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Special Representative for having sent a strong signal through Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) that punitive action must be taken against violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. The Government was currently working with relevant United Nations agencies to set up a task force on monitoring and reporting, as envisaged in the resolution.

62. *Mr. Butagira (Uganda) resumed the Chair.*

63. **Mr. Ouattara** (Burkina Faso) said that social development had become a main priority for Governments in developing countries. Burkina Faso had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and the Government had drawn up a strategic framework for 2006-2015 for the promotion of children, in accordance with the conclusions of the World Summit for Children. It also intended to pursue a zero-tolerance policy with respect to the genital mutilation of girls. Given the prevalence of child trafficking in the African subregion, a convention on human trafficking had recently been signed in Abidjan, with a view to the development of a regional strategy. With regard to the protection of neglected children in Burkina Faso, the department of social services was currently monitoring some 6,000 children.

64. Burkina Faso aligned itself with the commitments set forth in the final document of the special session of the General Assembly on children and hoped that the reform initiated by UNICEF would be approved by the members of its Executive Board. The national partners of UNICEF had adopted a plan on children's rights in the fields of education, health, communication for development and cultural activities to support the work of government departments and non-governmental organizations. Burkina Faso had also established a children's parliament, whose representatives were permitted to attend all national proceedings on children's rights and express its views. Also, the Government had undertaken a number of actions to reduce the vulnerability of young people to HIV/AIDS. Development policies everywhere should be aimed at reducing poverty and providing security so that children everywhere could live longer, healthier and more peaceful lives.

65. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that 190 States had ratified and acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since its entry into force in 1990. The members of the international community needed to cooperate with each other to identify solutions and allocate resources for problems such as abuse, violence, poverty and disease, which afflicted children in the developing countries in particular. Fiji was pleased that the United Nations agencies were providing financial and technical support to Member States to help them implement national programmes aimed at combating those problems.

66. Fiji had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993 and had established a national committee on children to monitor the implementation of programmes and activities. A family law act had also been introduced to reinforce parental responsibility for children. Recognizing that education contributed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, Fiji had made primary education compulsory and was taking steps to make secondary, vocational and higher education accessible to all.

67. Fiji faced a number of health challenges including child mortality, which had remained steady over the past decade. The Government had allocated the largest share of its annual budget to the Ministry of Health to implement preventive and curative health-

care programmes and awareness programmes on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

68. There were signs that minors were being forced to work and that children were being lured into the sex industry by both local and foreign adults. To combat that problem, Fiji had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Government and had ratified two international conventions against child labour. Fiji was currently taking steps to bring national laws and policies into line with those conventions.

69. Finally, Fiji had demonstrated its firm resolve to protect children from abuse in the areas of armed conflict and sexual exploitation by ratifying the two Optional Protocols in order to protect children from abuse during armed conflict and from sexual exploitation. His Government called upon civil society, non-governmental organizations and international agencies to provide financial and in-kind assistance to ensure their full implementation.

70. **Ms. Núñez de Odremán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her Government had focused its policies on social justice, seeking to eradicate poverty and social exclusion. Social policies in the country represented a strategic instrument for the elimination of inequality, discrimination and poverty among children and adolescents. Her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. With regard to protection, it had a national child and adolescent protection system whose highest authority was the National Council for Child and Adolescent Rights. The system had its legal basis in the National Constitution and the Organic Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents. In addition, care units had been established to process complaints about the violation of the rights and guarantees of children and adolescents, documents had been drawn up to prevent the sale and trafficking of children, and the birth registry had been updated. Her Government had approved a law on the social responsibility of radio and television as well as legislation for the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents.

71. The Strategic Social Plan (2001-2007) of the Ministry of Health and Social Development was generating awareness of the need to protect health, giving priority to local activities to improve living conditions and provide universal access to quality services, with emphasis on children. The Government had established the Social Investment Fund to meet the needs of the poor and the socially excluded, including children, adolescents and single mothers. The Ministry had also been implementing the National Strategic HIV/AIDS Plan since 2001, which focused on halting vertical transmission and on preventing sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, early pregnancies, and violence in the family. The Government had also established a national public health system to take the measures necessary for the prevention of all types of abuse and violence.

72. With a view to resolving the problems of social exclusion, particularly the exclusion of the poorest sectors from school, the Bolivarian Education System had been established which included early childhood education under Plan Simoncito. The Ministry of Education was developing a series of policies aimed at providing quality education for all by providing programmes in such areas as education from the womb to age six, integrated care and non-conventional education for indigenous children, alternative educational arrangements, and the school meals programme.

73. The National Council for Child and Adolescent Rights had formulated guidelines for the protection of the rights of adolescent workers and had also authorized follow-up to and participation in the national programme on working children and adolescents. The right of migrant children to education and training was also guaranteed, since all children in Venezuela were allowed to continue their studies in the Bolivarian schools.

74. Her country condemned all forms of violence against children and adolescents and noted with concern any recruitment of children by armed groups. It supported all initiatives aimed at improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict and greater effort should therefore be made to include issues related to the protection of children in the programmes of the United Nations system. The minimum age in the country for entry into the armed forces and participation in armed conflict was 18 years old. National law also encouraged the training and education of members of the armed forces in respect for human rights, especially those of children and women.

75. Her country firmly condemned trafficking in children and adolescents, inter alia, for sexual

exploitation, forced labour, slavery or the removal of organs. In that context, it had signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two Protocols on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons. To prevent child prostitution and the use of children in pornography, the National Council for Child and Adolescent Rights had approved general guidelines for the protection of children and adolescents against sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. An Intersectoral Commission against Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation had also been established.

76. **Ms. Al-Sadoon** (Bahrain) said that special attention was devoted to the family, including children, in Bahrain's National Action Charter and in its Constitution. The State also attached particular importance to the physical, moral and intellectual development of young people. At the international level, the current decade was characterized by efforts to ensure implementation of the legislation on children's rights, which had developed at a surprising pace over the previous decade or so, in order to reach such goals as those proposed in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "We the Children: End-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children" (A/S-27/3). It was therefore essential to translate the political consensus on children into effective action, in which context children's rights and specific child-related development goals were best pursued within the broader framework of human rights. To that end, well-integrated children's programmes and programmes to support families could play an influential role. The Millennium Development Goals were closely linked to the main commitments declared at the special session of the General Assembly on children, held in 2002, and six were directly related to children.

77. Bahrain had acceded in 1992 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the provisions of which were consistent with its Constitution and the national legislation, policies and programmes developed over the past 30 years and more. Among the other conventions to which it had acceded were the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. A national committee for children had been formed in 1999 in order to coordinate child-related activities, further the development of children in all age groups and monitor children's problems and essential needs with a view to proposing solutions and achieving the desired objectives. According to World Health Organization (WHO) indicators, infant and maternal mortality rates had fallen as a result of the improvement in health-care services delivered by trained personnel. Safe drinking water was now also universally supplied. Specific focus was placed on disadvantaged groups; orphans were taken care of under a foster programme, for instance, and received a monthly allowance, as did families in need and widowed women. Bahrain spared no efforts in its attempts to ensure prosperity for families in all sections of society and looked forward to achieving further successes on that score.

78. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was an important legal pillar to protect children against any abuse. The entry into force of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had strengthened the international legal framework in that area. However, despite all the efforts of the international community, children in several regions of the world remained in very difficult situations. The international community must therefore strengthen its efforts by taking the national and international measures needed to protect the rights of the child.

79. Morocco had undertaken measures aimed at preparing children to meet the challenges of the future. In that connection, the 2003 reform of the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure had established criminal responsibility at the age of 18 years and had set up children's courts, improving the procedures for them to follow. Real progress had been made with the entry into force of the Civil Status Act in 2002, which made it compulsory to register births and also allowed children born out of wedlock to enjoy civil status. The recently adopted Family Code represented a milestone in promoting the rights of women and children. Considerable progress had also been made in combating child labour through a new Labour Code. The Code prohibited the employment of children under 15 years and strengthened the penalties for non-compliance. The Moroccan Government had also recently adopted a draft decree listing the work prohibited to minors under 18 years of age, women and persons with disabilities.

80. His Government had implemented an annual strategy aimed at reducing illiteracy to below 20 per cent by 2010, with a view to eradicating it almost entirely by 2015. In that connection, the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity had established 40 new centres in order to allow girls and orphans, particularly from rural areas, to continue their studies in an appropriate environment.

81. Morocco had hosted a number of conferences and meetings related to the rights of the child, including the second Arab-African Conference on Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Violence against Children and the first meeting of the forum for the protection of children in conflict with the law. Morocco, with the support of UNICEF, had organized awareness-raising days for locally elected representatives and those responsible for defending and promoting the rights of the child. Non-governmental organizations in Morocco were also playing an important role in promoting the rights of the child, both at the national and international levels.

82. **Ms. Donovan** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the elimination of child labour was an attainable goal towards which her organization was working by means of international labour standards and technical cooperation. The fundamental international standards in that area were the Convention concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Convention No. 138) and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182). The former Convention had been ratified by 80 per cent of ILO member States and the latter by 87 per cent of them. The increasing ratification of the Conventions was having a substantial, if uneven, effect on country performance. For example, while there was a marked increase in the setting of policies and the adoption of legislative provisions, there was much less emphasis on effective measures to protect the most vulnerable child workers, including child soldiers and the girl child.

83. ILO estimates indicated that 246 million children aged 5 to 17 years had been involved in child labour worldwide in the year 2000. Of those, 171 million had been involved in work hazardous to their safety, physical or mental health or moral development, and 8.4 million had been subjected to the worst forms of child labour. ILO would release new estimates in its 2006 global report on child labour.

84. A number of countries had translated commitments to combat child labour into action by engaging in time-bound programmes with ILO under its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Time-bound programmes comprised comprehensive policies and measures with clear goals, specific targets and a defined time-frame aimed at preventing and eliminating the worst forms of child labour. By the end of 2005, 20 such programmes would be fully operational. A number of other countries were also applying similar approaches without ILO technical or external financial support.

85. An ILO study entitled "Investing in Every Child — An Economic Study of the Costs and Benefits of Eliminating Child Labour" had concluded that child labour could be eliminated over the following 15 to 20 years at a total cost of $760 billion. That figure constituted less than 10 per cent per annum of the world's total debt service over the next two decades and would yield $5 trillion in improved productivity, increased wages and reduced health costs, not to mention its unquestionable humanitarian, ethical and political benefits. Gender aspects should also not be overlooked in action against child labour, since girls and boys were not always affected by it in the same way. There were already numerous examples of how to ensure gender mainstreaming and promote gender equality in that area.

86. Her organization continued to combat child labour in close cooperation with the United Nations human rights bodies, especially the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had lent added impetus to the Convention and the two issues covered by them constituted the worst forms of child labour, which needed to be tackled as a matter of urgency.

87. ILO specifically focused its interventions on the most vulnerable groups that had suffered or might suffer from armed conflicts. Through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, ILO had initiated a major intervention in 2003 for the socio-economic rehabilitation of children and adolescents demobilized from various armed conflicts. The Programme complemented the international efforts of other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in that area. In September 2005, ILO had pledged to cooperate in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and

armed conflict under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

88. Her organization would continue to place special emphasis on the trafficking of children for labour or sexual exploitation. It was estimated that some 1.2 million children worldwide fell victim to trafficking each year. Countries must therefore adopt effective legislation, in line with international standards, against such practices. In that respect, ILO welcomed the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the recent adoption of a multilateral cooperation agreement to combat child trafficking in Western Africa by nine African countries. Effective legislation must be accompanied by concrete action to prevent trafficking in children, direct assistance to remove children from trafficking situations and appropriate arrangements for their rehabilitation and social integration.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.